

## COLLABORATIVE LEARNING AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN GRAMMAR CLASSES AMONG NON-ENGLISH MAJORS AT HO CHI MINH CITY INDUSTRY AND TRADE COLLEGE

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Received:</b> 15/9/2023</p> <p><b>Revised:</b> 30/10/2023</p> <p><b>Published:</b> 30/10/2023</p>	<p>How to involve non-English major students in classroom activities in English grammar classes has been always a concern of English teachers. This study is aimed to explore the extent of engagement of non-English major students through collaborative learning and find out the problems that students face when this method is employed in their grammar classes. This study employed mixed methods which combine qualitative and quantitative methods. A questionnaire, focus group interviews and observations were used to collect data. Convenience sampling method was selected to recruit participants for the study. 105 non-English major students at Ho Chi Minh City Industry and Trade College voluntarily participated in the survey, 12 of whom from four groups took part in group interviews. The results showed that the extent of non-English major students' engagement towards collaborative learning in grammar classes was average. Many students engaged in collaborative learning activities in terms of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. Nevertheless, there were certain students who did not take their English classes seriously. It was revealed that the reliance of passive students, disagreement among group members, noise, and the choice of individuals to cooperate with were the problems that students encountered when learning English grammar with this approach. Finally, several implications were suggested for teachers and students to enhance student engagement in English grammar classes.</p>
<p><b>KEYWORDS</b></p> <p>Collaborative Learning</p> <p>English grammar</p> <p>EFL students</p> <p>Student Engagement</p> <p>Vietnam</p>	

## PHƯƠNG PHÁP HỌC TẬP HỢP TÁC VÀ SỰ THAM GIA CỦA SINH VIÊN TRONG CÁC LỚP HỌC NGỮ PHÁP CỦA SINH VIÊN KHÔNG CHUYÊN TIẾNG ANH TẠI TRƯỜNG CAO ĐẲNG CÔNG THƯƠNG THÀNH PHỐ HỒ CHÍ MINH

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO	TÓM TẮT
<p><b>Ngày nhận bài:</b> 15/9/2023</p> <p><b>Ngày hoàn thiện:</b> 30/10/2023</p> <p><b>Ngày đăng:</b> 30/10/2023</p>	<p>Làm thế nào để thu hút sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh tham gia vào các hoạt động trong các lớp học ngữ pháp tiếng Anh luôn là mối quan tâm của giáo viên tiếng Anh. Mục đích của nghiên cứu này là nhằm khám phá mức độ tham gia của sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh thông qua học tập hợp tác và tìm ra những vấn đề mà sinh viên gặp phải khi phương pháp này được sử dụng trong các lớp ngữ pháp. Nghiên cứu này sử dụng các phương pháp hỗn hợp kết hợp phương pháp định tính và định lượng. Một bảng câu hỏi, phỏng vấn nhóm tập trung và quan sát được sử dụng để thu thập dữ liệu. Phương pháp lấy mẫu thuận tiện được lựa chọn để tuyển chọn đối tượng tham gia nghiên cứu. 105 sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh trường Cao đẳng Công thương Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh tự nguyện tham gia khảo sát, 12 sinh viên trong số đó đến từ bốn nhóm tham gia phỏng vấn nhóm. Kết quả cho thấy mức độ tham gia của sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh đối với việc học tập hợp tác trong các lớp ngữ pháp là trung bình. Nhiều học sinh tham gia vào các hoạt động học tập hợp tác về các khía cạnh hành vi, cảm xúc và nhận thức. Tuy nhiên, vẫn có một số học sinh không nghiêm túc học tiếng Anh. Kết quả cho thấy sự phụ thuộc của học sinh thụ động, sự bất đồng giữa các thành viên trong nhóm, tiếng ồn và sự lựa chọn thành viên khác để hợp tác thực hiện nhiệm vụ học tập trong lớp là những vấn đề chính mà học sinh gặp phải khi học tập hợp tác được áp dụng. Cuối cùng, một số đề xuất kiến nghị được đưa ra để giáo viên và học sinh có thể xem xét áp dụng nhằm tăng cường sự tham gia của học sinh trong các lớp học ngữ pháp tiếng Anh.</p>
<p><b>TỪ KHÓA</b></p> <p>Học tập hợp tác</p> <p>Ngữ pháp tiếng Anh</p> <p>Sinh viên học tiếng Anh như ngôn ngữ nước ngoài</p> <p>Sự tham gia của sinh viên</p> <p>Việt Nam</p>	

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## 1. Introduction

One of the concerns of language educators is to promote student-teacher cooperation in language practice activities. New pedagogical methods are always tested and researched to increase the quality of teaching and learning, one of which is Collaborative learning (CL). Ginting [1] believes that student engagement is one of the most important factors determining success in learning and suggests that CL is one of the pedagogical methods that promote participation of students most effectively. CL encourages students to work together, and that the more actively they cooperate, the more engaged they are [2]. Studying in pairs or groups not only improves class participation but also enhances positive emotions and strengthens working relationships [3], [4]. Law et al. [5] and Vega-Abarzua et al. [6] suggests that CL has a positive effect on three aspects of student engagement, including behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement.

Studies have shown that CL has positive effects on all three types of engagement when employed in teaching and learning English. However, students also encounter some problems when learning with this method. The unequal division of workload is discussed in several studies as the most common problems that students face in learning English in an CL environment in addition to some other issues such as teachers' instruction, classroom noise, influence of groupmate, etc. [7] - [10]. In studies investigating methods of encouraging student engagement, elements of interaction and CL are discussed. However, in the context of Vietnam, most of the studies on CL have looked at the use of the approach in teaching English speaking and writing skills [11], [12]. Not much attention has been paid to the use of CL in teaching English grammar classes. Some studies focus on studying CL in classes that teach other English skills such as speaking or writing skills. Thus, this study helps fill the gaps. The study is aimed to address two research questions:

1) To what extent are Ho Chi Minh City Industry and Trade College (HITU) non-English major students engaged in their grammar classes through collaborative learning?

2) What problems do students have when collaborative learning is employed in their grammar classes?

## 2. Research methodology

### 2.1. Research context and participants

The research was conducted at Ho Chi Minh City College of Industry and Trade. Convenience sampling, a type of non-probability sampling method, was used for the current study. This study collected data from the Basic English classes. This course covers sixty sessions over twelve weeks, with five periods per session, and focuses on teaching grammar to non-English majors. The researcher recruited students from two Basic English classes which involved 105 students volunteered to participate in the survey. In addition, five groups of students, 20 students in total who were among the 105 students voluntarily participated in the questionnaire survey, volunteered to take part in the interview. However, the interview involved only four groups with 12 students because one group responded that they were busy and could not participate in the interview.

Students in Basic English classes at HITU were mostly freshmen ranging from 18 to 20 in age, with 7-10 years of experience in English learning and they came from different majors. The study focused on freshmen who, as indicated by their entrance test scores, were supposed to be struggling more with English learning and find classroom activities boring and unpleasant. Therefore, the data collected enabled the researcher to be able to accurately assess the students' engagement in CL activities and identify the barriers that hindered their active participation in pair or group work.

### 2.2. Research instrument

This study employed mixed methods which combine qualitative and quantitative methods, including questionnaire, focus group interviews and observations. The questionnaire was adapted

from Vega-Abarzua [6] which investigated CL and its influence on student engagement and divided into three parts. The first part asked participants to provide general information about their age, gender, years of English study, and discipline. The second part consisted of nineteen Likert scale questions that displayed learner response scores ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*, on a scale of 1 to 5. This part covers three types of engagement: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in CL context. The third part consisting of 11 items (item 1-11) deals with the problems that students face when working in pairs or groups. The Cronbach's Alpha value of this section (.765) has shown the acceptable reliability of questionnaire for collecting and analyzing data. The second data collection tool used was the focus group interview. The interview questions were modified from those in Pham [8]. Eight questions used for the interview were related to the extent of engagement of the students in CL activities in grammar classes and problems students may encounter in CL context. Observation was used to collect data on CL activities, time, student attendance, attitude, and performance in class tasks throughout the course of the study. The observation note form was created by adapting the data collection tool used in the study of [13].

### 2.3. Procedures for data collection and analysis

The study took place for 12 weeks, allowing students sufficient time to engage in all pair or group activities in class learning grammar. In each lesson, the researcher applied CL in the teaching process and observed the students' learning experience. The researcher obtained an official approval from The HITU for conducting the study. A consent form was signed by the leader before data collection. The online form of the questionnaire was distributed to students who volunteered to participate in the twelfth week. The researcher guided participants how to select answers and submitted the responses. After the questionnaire had been completed by 105 students, face-to-face interviews were conducted with four groups of voluntary students, each of which lasted for about 10 minutes. The content of the interview was recorded in full.

The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire were coded and calculated by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0. The outcomes were displayed as numbers, with each number indicating the means (M) and the standard deviation (SD). Nineteen items in the second part of the questionnaire asking participants about their behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement into CL activities and 11 items in the third part investigating the problems that students face when participating in pairs or groups. The means (M) scores for the extent of engagement of non-English major students through CL activities were interpreted as very low (M=1.00 - 1.80), low (M=1.81 - 2.60), average (M=2.61 - 3.40), high (M=3.41 - 4.20), and very high (M=4.21 - 5.00).

Content analysis method was used to analyze the qualitative data collected from the interview and observation. The students in the interview groups were coded as S1, S2, S3, etc. to S12. The responses of the interviewees were classified and grouped into general categories. The observation focused on student interaction, students' engagement, and performance towards class activities. Data from observation notes that were pertinent to the research questions were also identified and analyzed.

## 3. Results and Discussion

The analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaire, focus group interview and observation revealed some findings which are reported and discussed below under the themes of the two research questions.

### 3.1. Results

#### 3.1.1. The extent of student engagement in CL context

Table 1 showed the aggregated data about the extent of non-English major students' engagement towards CL in grammar classes. The extent of student engagement in CL is reported in terms of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics of the extent of non-English major students' engagement towards CL in grammar classes

No	Non-English major students' engagement towards CL in grammar classes	N= 105	
		M	SD
1	Behavioral engagement	2.83	.56
2	Emotional engagement	2.99	.49
3	Cognitive engagement	2.97	.51
<b>Total</b>		<b>2.93</b>	<b>.52</b>

The mean of total for three types of engagement was 2.93 and SD=.52, which meant the extent of non-English major students' engagement towards CL in grammar classes was average. Among the elements, the emotional engagement in CL in grammar classes seemed to be the highest scale (M=2.99; SD= .49). Cognitive engagement (M=2.97; SD= .51) was perceived higher than behavioral engagement (M=2.83; SD=.56).

#### **Behavioral engagement**

The findings show that the total mean scores of the degree of student engagement in terms of behavioral engagement is average (M=2.83; SD=.56). As a result, the level of behavioral engagement in CL activities in grammar classes of the student is average.

Most of the students rarely "check notes before every lesson" (item 1: M=1.59, SD=1.33). The two items "performed the tasks more effectively" (item 2: M=3.02, SD=.76) and "actively contributed to pair and group discussions" (item 6: M=3.03, SD=.85) were also perceived equally in an average. In the interview, there was a student shared that there were some non-serious discussions among students: "... According to my group, they have discussions but not much, if the teacher observes, they will work together more seriously, but if the teacher does not pay attention, they will discuss superficially." (S4). In addition, when working pairs or groups, students were "active in answering the teacher's questions" (item 3: M=3.10, SD=.70) and were "willing to participate in classroom activities" (item 5: M=3.11, SD=.81) received an average of five scales. Most of the students expressed their high extent of "listening to the lecture attentively" (item 4: M=3.13, SD=.67). The results from the interview also showed similar results to the data from the questionnaire. Following is the opinion of S3 about his willingness to volunteer after CL: "after discussing, we understood more than half of the structure, so when the teacher explained again, we focused on listening to understand the part that we did not understand very well, then the teacher raised any questions for us, I volunteered to answer to get bonus points." (S3).

Based on the researcher's observations during the study sessions, students tended to participate more actively after the group work. For the first three weeks of the course, students with higher English proficiency were always the first ones to raise hand. However, in the sessions that followed, the less English competent students improved their performance by actively participating in answering teachers' questions, as more competent group members encouraged them to speak up. Many students listened more attentively due to group discussions on the lesson topics, and they completed groupwork tasks more quickly and precisely than individual tasks.

#### **Emotional engagement**

Regarding "Emotional engagement", the total mean scores of this type are average (M=2.99; SD=.49). It is evident that the extent of student's emotional engagement in CL activities in grammar classes is not very high.

"Being curious" about each pair or group activity that the teacher was about to carry out (item 10: M=2.85; SD=.76) seemed to be the feeling that students experience the least while learning. The other elements regarding emotional engagement in the CL activities with low mean score were respectively "being satisfied with the learning results" (item 13: M=2.96; SD=.77), "enjoyed learning grammar in the English class" (item 9: M=2.97; SD=.77), "learning grammar in pairs or groups was more interesting than traditional learning" (item 7: M=2.98; SD=.81) and "learning grammar in pairs or groups was effective" (item 12: M=2.99; SD=.79). Two out of the

twelve students in the interview did not give positive feedback to the use of CL activities in their grammar classes: *"I don't enjoy it (CL activities), but I don't hate it either, it is normal."* (S10); *"I am not very interested because I do not like studying grammar or English."* (S12).

However, the two other items with the same mean score which are "motivated to learn grammar" (item 11: M=3.08; SD=.74) and "feeling comfortable" (item 8: M=3.08; SD=.73) received the highest scale among the items. Three students gave some evidence to clarify the emotional benefits of CL as follows: *"Group activities make me more responsible, less lazy and have a more collaborative spirit to study."* (S1); *"... actually learning grammar is boring, so working in groups is more effective."* (S7); *"I like to study in groups, because studying grammar together helps me to be more confident in the answers of the exercises, I am afraid of making mistakes when I do it alone."* (S11).

The researcher's observation showed that some students with low English ability engaged in personal activities like internet surfing or talking with friends, while others were working in groups. These individuals exhibited a lack of enthusiasm for class activities and English learning by simply observing their friends' activities instead of actively participating in these activities. On the other hand, students with good and average abilities actively worked together, sharing, and explaining how to solve the tasks. Nevertheless, not all groups in the class worked actively because English is not favorite subject of most of the students in these classes.

#### **Cognitive engagement**

Regarding "*Cognitive engagement*", the overall mean scores of all the items for this type are average (M=2.99; SD=.49). Similar to the two aspects of engagement above, the extent of student's cognitive engagement is average.

"Seeking help from other members in my group" (item 19: M=2.55; SD=. 63) received negatively from the other items. "Trying to have the best answer/solution to the questions" (item 16: M=2.90; SD=. 73), "trying to use English to answer the teacher's questions" (item 17: M=2.92; SD=. 69) and "seeking help from my teacher" (item 18: M=2.95; SD=. 67) perceived at an average scale of the five scale among the other items. S1 and S9 talked about their efforts to understand the tasks as follows: *"...if I do not know, I will ask the teacher to explain the lesson or ask the friends around."* (S1); *"I usually asked for suggestions from the teacher, then used that suggestion to work with my friends in the group to get the best answer."* (S9).

The data analysis clearly showed that the highest perception was "trying to accomplish pair or group activities within the given time" (item 15: M=3.07; SD=.71) and "trying to understand the task and lesson" (item 14: M=2.98; SD=.68). For instance, S4 and S6 expressed their efforts to solve difficult tasks as follows: *"For grammar exercises, I used Google translate so that I could understand the meaning of the words in the task or asked someone who works with me, if we were confused about which idea was correct, we wrote both ideas for the teacher to correct later."*(S4); *"If it was allowed from the beginning, we would search on the internet, each of us has a device to find, then everyone would share the answer they had found..."* (S6).

Throughout her teaching and observation, the researcher found that when all the students did not comprehend group work instructions, one or two confident students immediately asked the teacher. Most of the students used Google Translate to quickly understand word meanings and completed tasks within a time limit. Some students also tried their best to answer or convey the group's answers in English to the simple English questions.

Based on data collected from questionnaires, focus group interviews and classroom observations, it can be concluded that many students have an interest in CL activities in grammar classes. However, there were some students who studied passively and did not take their English classes seriously.

#### **3.1.2. The problems non-English major students encountered in CL context**

The second research question aimed to explore the problems that students encountered when CL was employed in their grammar classes. The data collected from the student questionnaire is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics of non-English major students' perception towards problems of collaborative learning in their grammar classes

No.	Problems of collaborative learning in grammar classes	N= 105	
		M	SD
1	There was not enough time to do pair or group activities in class.	2.10	1.04
2	I did more work than other members when doing pair or group activities.	3.84	1.03
3	Some group members were too passive.	3.72	0.88
4	My group members and I had some communication problems when doing pair or group activities.	2.77	0.93
5	The introduction of the teacher was unclear.	1.90	1.36
6	The group project and some pair or group activities were difficult.	3.45	1.23
7	Some pair or group activities were repeated.	2.37	1.16
8	My group members and I disagreed on ideas when working in pairs or groups.	3.60	1.10
9	The classroom was too noisy when groups discuss at the same time.	2.43	1.29
10	I did not receive feedback from the teacher for revision.	1.51	1.32
11	I preferred working alone to working in pairs or groups.	1.44	1.26
<b>Total</b>		<b>2.65</b>	<b>0.63</b>

As shown in Table 2, some of the problems that students encountered such as “preferring working alone” to working in pairs or groups (item 11: M=1.44; SD=1.26), “no feedback from the teacher for revision” (item 10: M=1.51; SD=1.32) and “the introduction of the teacher was unclear” (item 5: M=1.90; SD=1.36) did not significantly affect their group learning experience. Moreover, several students also considered issues like “there was not enough time” (item 1: M=2.10; SD=1.04) and their “group members and they had some communication problems when doing pair or group activities” (item 4: M=2.18; SD=1.23) prevented them from having been successful in pair or group work. Other factors that might often cause students to lose enjoyment in group learning were “some pair or group activities were repeated” (item 7: M=2.37; SD=1.16) and “the classroom was too noisy” (item 9: M=2.43; SD=1.29). Some students shared some other problems they had in their grammar learning with CL: “We feel that there was not enough time when doing difficult exercises.” (S6); “I think one of the difficulties I faced when working in groups is that the class was sometimes noisy, so I get a little distracted.” (S7); “I liked it at first, but later on, I felt a bit bored because there were some repetitive activities that were no longer interesting.” (S12). These reported problems revolve around limited time, noise, and repetitive activities.

In addition, all items had a mean score that ranged from 3.41 to 4.20, which demonstrates that most of the students agreed that these problems had major effects on their learning in class. These problems included “group project or group activities were difficult” (item 6: M=3.45; SD=.93) and “disagreeing between group members” (item 8: M=3.60; SD=1.10). The following are some of the students' comments regarding these issues: “Sometimes, there were some difficult tasks, but group members pushed the responsibility on each other, no division, they fought for the easy task, then we have a bit of a disagreement, our group members refused to do the difficult tasks.” (S3); “I think it is because we often had different opinions while doing the task, and then everyone thought their answer was correct, so we could not agree on the common answer.” (S10).

Noticeably, the data clearly showed that “working more than other members” (item 2: M=3.84; SD=1.03) and “some group members were too passive” (item 3: M=3.72; SD=.88) were perceived highest. These results aligned with those from the interviews as some students expressed: “... It is like when we are in a group, we often rely on each other ...” (S1); “Some of my peers did not contribute to the group work but still enjoyed the efforts of the rest of the members, this made me very uncomfortable.” (S4); “I think the difficulty is that there are many people in the group, but only a few of them contribute ideas.” (S9).

In the interview, some students share some other problems they found uncomfortable discussing in groups, which were not covered in the questionnaire. Those problems included “distracted students” and “inappropriate students collaborate”. For example, two students

commented: *“With a small group which we are free to choose members, we will be more interested in the work, and the members will be more responsible for the assignments. Because we find it difficult to collaborate with friends who we rarely interact with.” (S4); “I want to be paired with a friend who has similar abilities with me, but if I have to study in pairs with a dissimilar ability student as mine, I lose interest in studying.” (S5).*

In summary, the findings show that the total mean scores of the problems that students encountered when CL was employed in their grammar classes were average ( $M=2.65$ ;  $SD=.63$ ). Many students had difficulties with pair or group study due to lack of teamwork skills and responsibility.

### **3.2. Discussion**

#### *3.2.1. The extent of student engagement in CL context*

Regarding the extent of student engagement in CL context, the findings from the current study showed that more than half of the students participated in CL activities in English grammar classes. This finding is in line with that from other studies showing the effectiveness of CL integration on students' engagement in English classrooms [6], [13]-[16]. Nevertheless, the means score of student engagement was merely average, indicating that some students were not involved in classroom tasks and their awareness of CL activities was limited.

In terms of behavioral engagement, most of the students who collaborated with others showed increased confidence in their knowledge and were more willing to participate in class activities. This result supports [6], which claimed that CL, via its student-centered orientation, aids learners in acquiring significant knowledge and self-confidence. Data from the interviews and observations revealed that fairly qualified students were willing to discuss and to share ideas to support their classmates during class. This is consistent with the finding of [14] who suggested that CL and bonus points fostered student support each other in achieving group and individual goals, enhancing behavioral engagement during lessons. In addition, some groups seemed to superficially discuss in class activities to mislead the teacher's attention. This is a non-serious form of behavioral engagement that does not result in efficient learning.

With reference to emotional engagement, nearly half of the students reported their positive opinions during pair or group learning activities in class, despite some unpleasant feelings they had. Most students reported that they were a little curious about pair or group activities due to the overwhelming number of grammatical points covered during a 12-week study period. This supports [13] assertion that curiosity stimulates interest and encourages greater participation in class activities. The interview also revealed that most non-English major students found English grammar boring as it reduced their emotional engagement in class activities. Even so, when studying in pairs or groups, a sense of comfort and motivation was established among students. This finding is consistent with that from [15] which suggested that there was motivation which was built during the process students helped one another. For students of lower English proficiency, motivation is an essential aspect that encourages student engagement in the learning process.

Many students still behaved in a way that reflects their cognitive engagement while learning in class. These behaviors revolve around trying to understand tasks and lessons, using translation tools, or seeking teacher help when struggling with tasks. This result is in line with the study of [16] which claimed that one of the signs of cognitive engagement is the readiness to deal with challenging ideas to comprehend them. Several students have been actively using English to answer teachers' questions, valuing the use of their classroom knowledge for personal and group benefit. This finding was supported by the result of [6] which showed that using English in class is one of the behaviors of cognitive engagement.

#### *3.2.2. Problems non-English major students encountered in CL context*

Regarding problems non-English major students encountered in CL context, the results revealed that when working in pairs or groups, the main issues are related to problems with peers, class conditions and groupmate selection.

The first problem that most groups of students faced when working in pairs or groups was the reliance of passive students on more active students. These students are frequently perceived as free riders, demonstrating a lack of commitment to their education and reliance on others' efforts. This result is in line with [9] which found that that certain students' dependence on group members negatively impacts other's member learning experience.

The second problem is disagreement in pairs or groups, which often arises due to lack of individual's collaboration skills and perception of task difficulty. This finding is consistent with [7] and [9] who claimed that students tend to hate pair or group work due to lack of collaboration skills or acceptance of opinions which prevents them from working effectively.

Noise is regarded as the third problem for students' pair or group learning. This finding is consistent with [8] and [10] who suggested that a high level of noise is one of the factors affecting group learning. The noise appeared during class assignments, possibly due to off-task students engaging in unrelated conversations.

The last problem that most students encountered in CL context is the selection of members to cooperate with. Many students believe that working with peers who are equally proficient in learning English could increase their enthusiasm for studying. This finding is supported by [10] which stated that students would rather be with their close friends or classmates who serious and take responsibility for performing the assignment successfully.

#### 4. Conclusion

The findings from the current study demonstrate that most of the students were solely engaged in CL activities to an average extent. Although many students were involved in all the three elements of engagement involving behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects, the findings indicated that there was still a lack of awareness of CL among some students.

In terms of behavioral engagement, many students were willing to participate in class activities, answering teacher questions, listening to lectures, and exchanging ideas. Several students who are more competent in their English encouraged less competent students to participate in teacher-student interaction. Regarding emotional engagement, many students found CL activities helpful in learning grammar, but the repetition of the CL tasks caused these students to lose curiosity, which made them uninterested in group assignments in the final weeks of the course. As far as cognitive engagement is concerned, half of the students attempted to comprehend the lesson by using translation tools and consulted teachers to save time and finished the tasks within the allotted time. They also engaged in English-speaking activities for individual and group benefit.

Regarding the problems they reported having in their English grammar classes with the intervention of CL, findings revealed four main problems. First, the reliance of passive members on active students negatively impacts students' learning experiences in pairs or groups. The second problem is disagreement between pair or group members, which was considered to have been caused by a lack of collaboration skills. The third problem is noise, which distracted many students during group work. Finally, it was the selection of members to cooperate with as some students were unwilling to work with classmates whose English proficiency was lower than their own or who have inappropriate ways of working.

The sample size of this study was relatively small because the population was limited to two classes in a specific context of a college in a city in Vietnam, which could limit the generalizability of the findings. Further studies should be designed with larger sample sizes to be able to find out common problems most first-year students encounter when they are learning English grammar in CL. However, these findings suggest some practical recommendations which are important for English teachers at the college and similar contexts to consider promoting student engagement and minimize problems they may face in CL activities. First, it is recommended that by instructing collaborative skills before beginning the task, teachers would help students to resolve disagreements and promoting understanding of collaboration as a crucial learning component.



Secondly, teachers should be engaged in discussions in class with group members, listening to and asking relevant questions to ensure they are still completing tasks during the discussion. In addition, students should make more effort in participating in collaborative activities by joining the college English club which are expected to help them develop their collaborative learning and peer interaction and maintain their regular English language learning.

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